

truly as possible, drawing as much from my own experience as from the certain experiences of my friends and fellow navigators'. On his regional charts and world map he draws only discovered coasts, in contrast to the more cosmographical depictions of his successors, such as Pierre Desceliers.

The place-name interpretations of Bill Richardson are ingenious, but the concept of Java-la-Grande as a composite of southern Java and Indo China is in my view far-fetched and not proven. It does not do justice to the unequalled cartographic and geographical expertise of the Dieppe navigators, for whom Java-la-Grande was a great southern land. The identification of the land with Australia follows from this thesis.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Helen Wallis, ed. *The Maps and Text of the Boke of Idrography presented by Jean Rotz to Henry VIII*. Oxford, published by Lord Eccles for the Roxburghe Club, 1981.
- ² Examples are preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and in the British Library.
- ³ BN, Paris, Ms. français 676.

Jave-La-Grande is not Australia

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The continent of Jave-la-Grande on the mid-16th century manuscript Dieppe maps has been the subject of much speculation for over two hundred years and has been claimed to provide evidence of an early Portuguese discovery of Australia.

Mathematical and navigational arguments used by some writers to transform the outline of Jave-la-Grande into something more closely resembling that of Australia, and seeking to 'correct' its location and scale, have proved unsustainable. All proponents of the Portuguese discovery thesis are agreed that the source material used by the French to construct Jave-la-Grande must have been Portuguese, since they correctly recognise that the inscriptions on its east and west coasts are either in Portuguese, French, Gallicised Portuguese or, in some cases, are apparent gibberish. Yet until recently no one had set about a critical examination of the inscriptions. The result of such an investigation of the place-names on both coasts provides clear evidence that Jave-la-Grande is definitely not an early map of Australia (Figure 1).

One of the key inscriptions on the west coast is *quabesequiesce*, a mistranscription of the Portuguese *quabeb aqui esta* ('cubeb is here'), cubeb being a much-prized variety of pepper then grown exclusively in

western Java. Another is *Haure de Sylla/cap* ('Harbour of Cilacap'), the only significant port on Jave's south coast, while yet another is *gao*, an early, common, variant spelling of the Portuguese word *jao* ('Javanese').

The east coast of Jave-la-Grande has always attracted most speculation because of the apparent similarity of part of it to the 'corresponding' part of Australia's east coast. The large triangular promontory of *cap de fremose* at its southeastern extremity, however, has puzzled all proponents of the Portuguese discovery thesis, since no corresponding Australian feature exists. No fewer than four alternative identifications have been proposed, in locations ranging from Cape Howe in Australia itself to Tasmania and New Zealand's North Island.

Just as the west coast names on Jave-la-Grande identify that coast as an early inaccurate sketch chart of southwestern Java, so the east coast names provide evidence that it is actually a copy of a misplaced, very early sketch chart of the coast of Vietnam, the *cap de fremose* promontory being actually the Mekong delta (Figure 2). *Coste des herbaiges* ('Coast of pastures') is a French misrendering of a Portuguese inscription, *coasta de champa*; Champa, then the central kingdom in Vietnam, was misread as the French word *champs* ('fields') and recorded by the synonym *herbaiges*. *Coste dangereuse* ('Dangerous coast') is a mistranscription of

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Figure 1 South-East Asia, Indonesia and Australia with the Harleian (Dauphin) map's outline of Java, Sumbawa and Jave-la-Grande superimposed. The comparison is based on the assumption that the north coasts of Java and Sumbawa should coincide on the two maps and that the rest of each map is on the same scale. The Harleian map's scale, however, is far from being consistent overall, since the latitude of cap de fremose, according to the latitude scale passing down the middle of the Atlantic, should be about 46°S, south of Tasmania, not just north of Cape Howe. This superimposition thus shortens the east coast of Jave-la-Grande by some 13°, or about 1500 kilometres.

(Drawn by Jens Smith, Flinders University, South Australia.)

the Portuguese *costa da varela*, more commonly written *coasta dauarela*, Varela then being the name of the most prominent cape on Vietnam's east coast; one map records it by a French synonym, *coaste perilleuse*. The ungrammatical *cap de fremose* ('Cape of beautiful') is the result of a French misreading of the Portuguese *cabo de camboja* ('Cape of Cambodia'), the name by which the tip of the Mekong delta was then known. The island of *Aliofer* is actually Hainan Island off the south coast of China, then famous for pearls; the Portuguese word *aljofar* ('seed pearl') was attached to it on a number of 16th century maps of South East Asia; it is another case, like 'cubeb', where a commercial product was taken to be the name of a place.

Several more names on both coasts confirm the identification of the west and east coasts of Jave-la-Grande as those of South West Java and Vietnam respectively. It will be appreciated that a thorough historical knowledge of Portuguese and French is necessary for the unscrambling of such inscriptions, as well as the ability to read and interpret the many variations in handwriting and spelling that occurred on 16th century manuscripts. My paper on Mercator's southern continent confirms that inscriptions on early maps and charts are vastly more significant than coastal outlines.

The French must have acquired not merely Spanish and Portuguese world maps, but also two Portuguese charts which they believed genuine but which they could not identify either from the coastal outlines or from the inscriptions; they must have lacked both a scale and orientation, as was by no means unusual. Their incorporation on world maps south of Java and Sumbawa was almost certainly due to three factors: defective copies of Marco Polo's travels had appeared to state that there was land south of Java (Mercator was also deceived by the same text); Portuguese charts left blank the south coasts of Java and Sumbawa as they were believed to be uncharted; Magellan's discovery of Tierra del Fuego's north coast had appeared to confirm the existence of a vast landmass in the southern hemisphere, for the long believed essential to counterbalance that in the northern hemisphere. Some of the Dieppe cartographers actually joined up the Jave-la-Grande both eastwards and westwards to Tierra del Fuego, thus forming one huge hypothetical southern continent.

For further, more detailed treatment of the place-name evidence, see my *The Portuguese Discovery of Australia: Factor or Fiction?*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1989 (Occasional Lecture Series, No. 3) and the articles quoted in the notes, especially 'Is Jave-la-Grande Australia? The linguistic evidence concerning the west coast', *The Globe* (Journal of the Australian Map Circle), 19 (1983), pp. 9-46, and 'Jave-la-Grande: A place-name chart of its east coast', *The Great Circle* (Journal of the Australian Association for Maritime History), Vol. 6, No. 1 (April 1984), pp. 1-23.

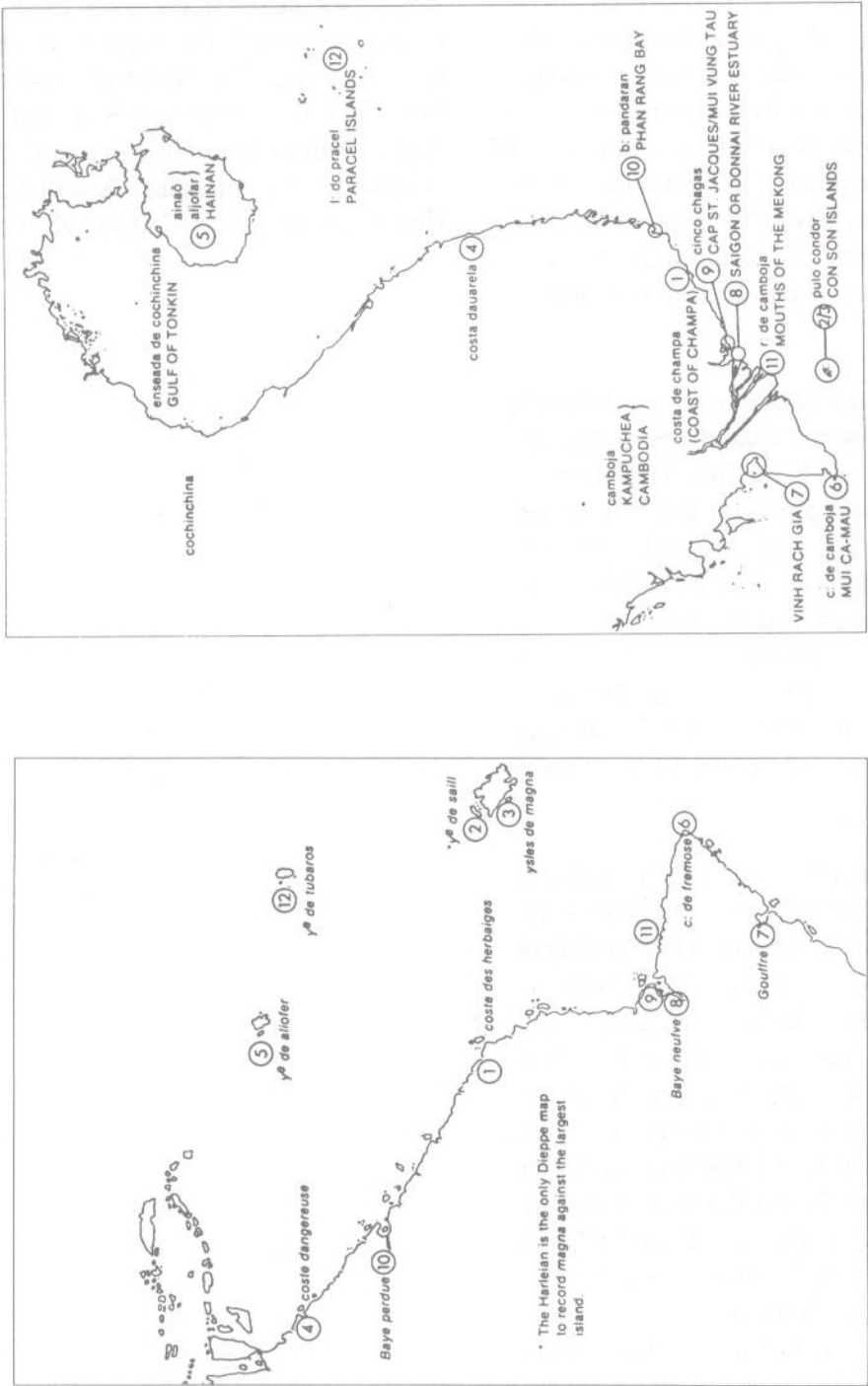


Figure 2 The east coast of Jave-la-Grande and that of Vietnam, with suggested corresponding features.

NB 1: Only the items numbered 1, 4, 5 and 6 are commented on briefly here. The remainder are dealt with in my National Library of Australia lecture and in the article in *The Great Circle*, both of which are mentioned in the text.

NB 2: The commonest names known to the Portuguese are given alongside the modern names where possible.

NB 3: All the names on the east coast of Jave-la-Grande are upside down on the Harleian map.

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